STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. 14-JUN02

CODE: 2012 International Building Code

SECTION: 1208.3 Room Area; 1208.4 Efficiency Dwelling Units

QUESTION 1: IBC Section 1208.3 states that dwelling units contain at least one room of

120 sq. ft. net area and that all other habitable rooms be of at least 70 sq. ft. net area. Assuming that all features required in a legal *dwelling* are present, is there a requirement to have habitable rooms in addition to the single required 120 sq. ft. room? More specifically, can the required provisions of living, sleeping, eating and cooking all be contained in this one 120 sq. ft. room and does the bathroom have to be in a separate room or area?

ANSWER 1: No. Additional habitable rooms are not required in addition to the single

required 120 sq. ft. room if all of the requirements are met. That is, if the 120 square feet of habitable space includes the required elements for habitation, i.e., running water, heat, sanitation, kitchen clearance, ceiling heights, etc. then the 120 sq. ft. space would meet the code specifications. However, bathrooms are required, and yes, they do need to be in a separate room or area; their dimensions would not be included in the calculation of the 120 sq. ft., as they are specifically excluded from the definition of *habitable space*.

DWELLING: A building that contains one or two *dwelling units* used, intended or designed to be used, rented, leased, let or hired out to be occupied for living purposes.

DWELLING UNIT. A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.

HABITABLE SPACE. A space in a building for living, sleeping, eating or cooking. Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, halls, storage or utility spaces and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.

QUESTION 2: IBC Section 1208.4 provides for a minimum area of 220 sq. ft. in an

"Efficiency dwelling unit." While I envision the intent of this section is what is commonly referred to as a studio apartment, there appears to be no IBC definition of the term "Efficiency dwelling unit". If a dwelling unit does not have habitable rooms other than the room of at least 120 sq. ft. net area, must that dwelling unit meet the size requirements of IBC Section 1208.4?

ANSWER 2: No. The IBC describes the necessary components of, but does not define, an

efficiency dwelling unit. As long as the unit meets the minimum space requirement of 120 sq. ft. net area, and includes the required appliances and a

separate bathroom, it is in compliance with the IBC.

SUPERSEDES: None

REQUESTED BY: City of Bellingham